



Common Nouns vs. Proper Nouns: A Guide for 1st Grade

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Written by Lori Toney, English teacher, educational writer and mother of three school children

While nouns are generally easier for young learners to grasp, they can still be tricky to teach because there are just so many types of them! Add in specific grammar rules, such as capitalization, and even older children and even adults struggle to know when a noun must be capitalized.

After mastering **common nouns**, it's time to introduce proper nouns. Some proper nouns are tough for first graders to understand because some words can be both a common noun and a proper noun depending on the context in which the word is used.

Let's explore more about the differences between common and proper nouns, and how to teach kids to properly capitalize proper nouns when they write them.

Common vs. Proper Nouns: What's the Difference?

To review, common nouns are types or categories of:

People- sister, brother, cousin, mom, dad, teacher, doctor, friend

Places- school, home, city, hospital, zoo, grocery store, country

Things- holidays, flowers, animals, soda, video games, shoes, toys

Ideas- language, math, happiness, anger, love, beauty, traditions

Notice that all the words listed above are unspecific; they all refer to general people, places, things, and ideas. As a result, each word in the list above starts with a lowercase letter.

In contrast, proper nouns are different in that they're specific. They name a specific person, place, thing, or idea and single it out among other objects in the same category. Here are some examples of categories of proper nouns:

Person- Jonathan, Dr. Johnson, Mom, Dad, Aunt Jenny, Mrs. Smith, Mary, Mike, etc.

Places- America, Ohio, Houston, Walmart, The Cleveland Clinic, Creekside Elementary School

Things- Coca-Cola, Barbie Dolls, Tony the Tiger, Nike shoes, Roblox, Nintendo Switch, Christmas

Ideas- English, The Golden Rule, The American Revolution, Christmas

It's important to note that all the above words are capitalized, as all proper nouns must begin with a capital letter. That is because each proper noun refers to someone or something that is unique with a name or a title.

This can get confusing when it comes to words like "mom" or "dad". The general rule here is:

- Capitalize words like Mom or Dad when referring to one's own mom or dad or calling them by their honorific title.
- Do not capitalize words like mom or dad when referring to moms and dads in general, or when writing about another person's mom or dad.

Common vs. Proper Nouns Learning Activities

To get started teaching your first grader to recognize the differences between common and proper nouns, check out a few helpful resources by Kids Academy. Begin by introducing this [Noun Search worksheet](#):



Noun Search



Underline the nouns in the sentences below.
There can be more than one noun in a sentence.



1. Mike lives in a big house.



2. Sarah has a smart dog.



3. Tom is my brother.



4. James built a snowman.



While this worksheet contains both common and proper nouns, after completion, speak with learners and ask them to identify those that are proper and discuss how they are different from the common nouns.

Next, offer students as much practice as possible! Use drill exercises such as [these](#):

The image shows two identical interactive drill exercises side-by-side. Each exercise is contained within a light blue border. At the top left of each box is a speaker icon and the text: "How many **proper nouns** do you see? Click the correct number." At the top right is a blue 'X' button. Below the text is a light pink rectangular area containing a list of nouns. In the first exercise, the nouns are: fruit, juice, Canada, paper, Chicago, egg, Thanksgiving, monkey, socks, and Mr. Carter. In the second exercise, the nouns are: tea, Mike, New Year, Jamaica, puzzle, marker, bunny, table, Mickey Mouse, and Ohio. Below the list of nouns is a horizontal row of orange buttons numbered 0 through 10. At the bottom center of each box is a grey "CHECK" button. At the bottom right is a small icon of a document with a heart and the letters "PDF".

How many **proper nouns** do you see? Click the correct number.

fruit juice
Canada paper Chicago
egg Thanksgiving monkey
socks Mr. Carter

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

CHECK

PDF

How many **proper nouns** do you see? Click the correct number.

tea Mike New Year
Jamaica puzzle marker
bunny table
Mickey Mouse Ohio

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

CHECK


PDF

There are three levels of [common versus proper noun drills](#) available, and each task students with identifying and counting proper nouns by searching through a list of both types. After finishing all three rounds, children may progress to drills that task students with filling in sentences with proper nouns, like these [drills](#) below:


| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Which proper noun fits into this sentence? Choose the correct answer.</p> <p>_____gave us homework.</p> <p>President Lincoln Mr. Clayton Mount Everest</p> <p>CHECK</p> <p>PDF</p> | <p>Which proper noun fits into this sentence? Choose the correct answer.</p> <p>_____is a fun toy.</p> <p>Thanksgiving Lego Dr. Seuss</p> <p>CHECK</p> <p>PDF</p> |
| <p>Which proper noun fits into this sentence? Choose the correct answer.</p> <p>I saw _____at the park.</p> <p>Anna October New Year</p> <p>CHECK</p> <p>PDF</p> | <p>Which proper noun fits into this sentence? Choose the correct answer.</p> <p>We saw animals at the zoo in_____.</p> <p>Donald Duck Atlantic Ocean Houston</p> <p>CHECK</p> <p>PDF</p> |

Finally, when you're ready to put your child to the test to see if they mastered common versus proper nouns, try assessing their learning with this [quiz](#):


123456




Look at the **proper nouns** on the left. Drag and drop them to the groups they belong to.



Sweet
Tooth
Candy



New
York



Jeremy

| person | thing | place |
|--------|-------|-------|
| | | |

Confirm

This quiz offers a series of drag-and-drop tasks that allow kids to sort and categorize both common and proper nouns. It wraps up by asking students to identify both types in sentences to gauge skill mastery. Use it to tell if your little learner is ready to move on to the next grammar concept.

To explore all our language and grammar resources, don't forget to check out our full library of learning materials at www.kidsacademy.mobi! Once there, discover how your child can learn for free online, or check out all our digital learning options, including our web-based [Kids Academy Classroom](#) where you can create curated classes on different topics and share them with your students!